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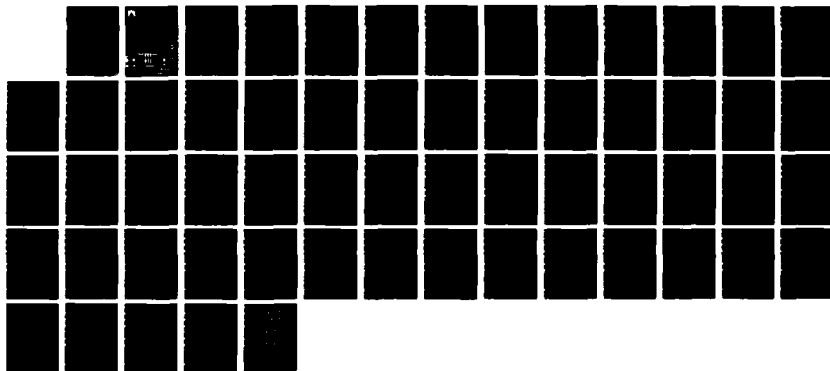
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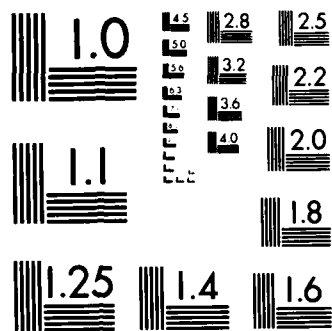
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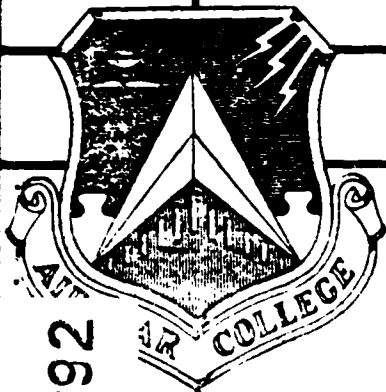
SOUTHEAST ASIA: A CASE STUDY FOR  
NATIONAL STRATEGY

By LIEUTENANT COLONEL PAUL R. HOLSER

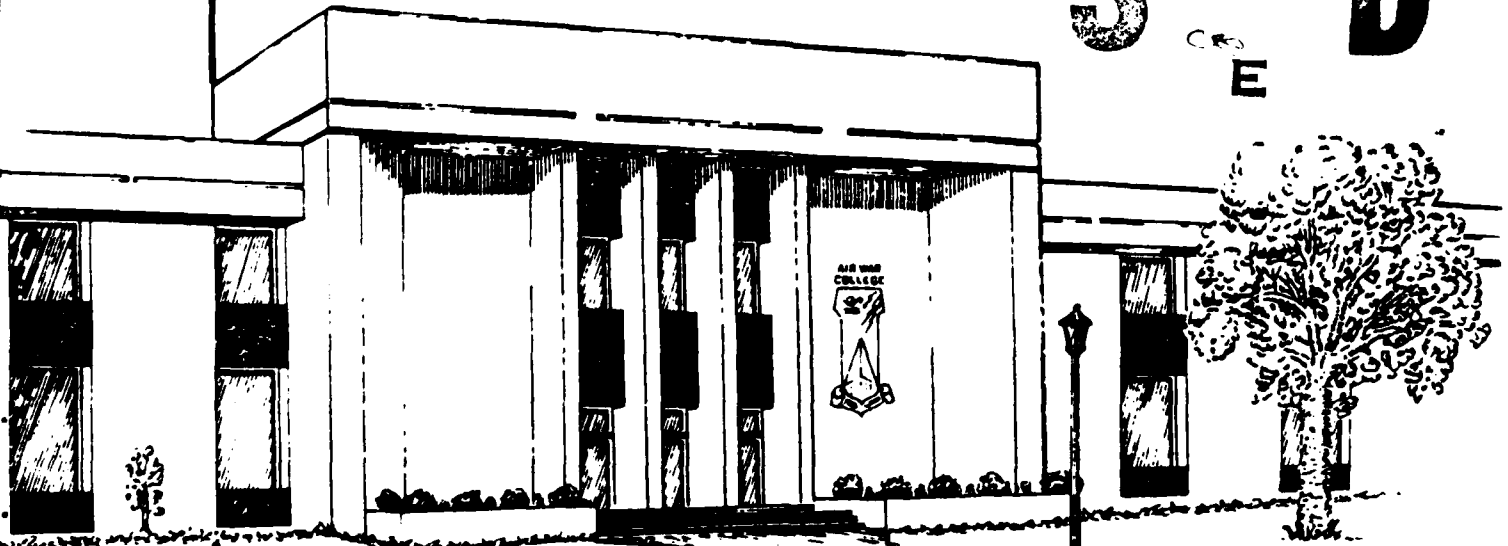
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AIR UNIVERSITY

SOUTHEAST ASIA : A CASE STUDY  
FOR NATIONAL STRATEGY

by

Paul R. Holser  
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

Thesis Advisor: Doctor John Thompson

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

MAY 1987



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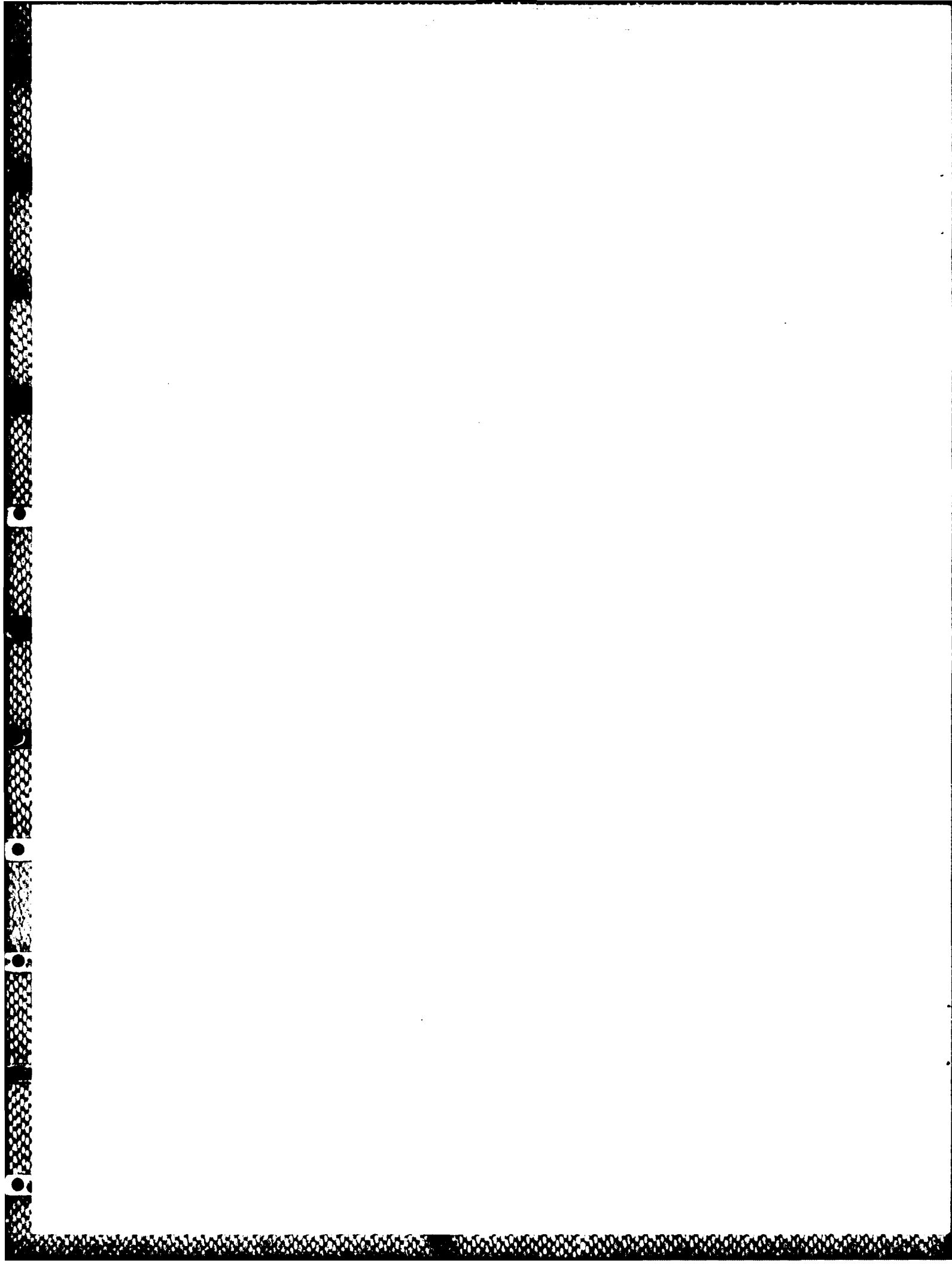
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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Southeast Asia : A Case Study for National Strategy

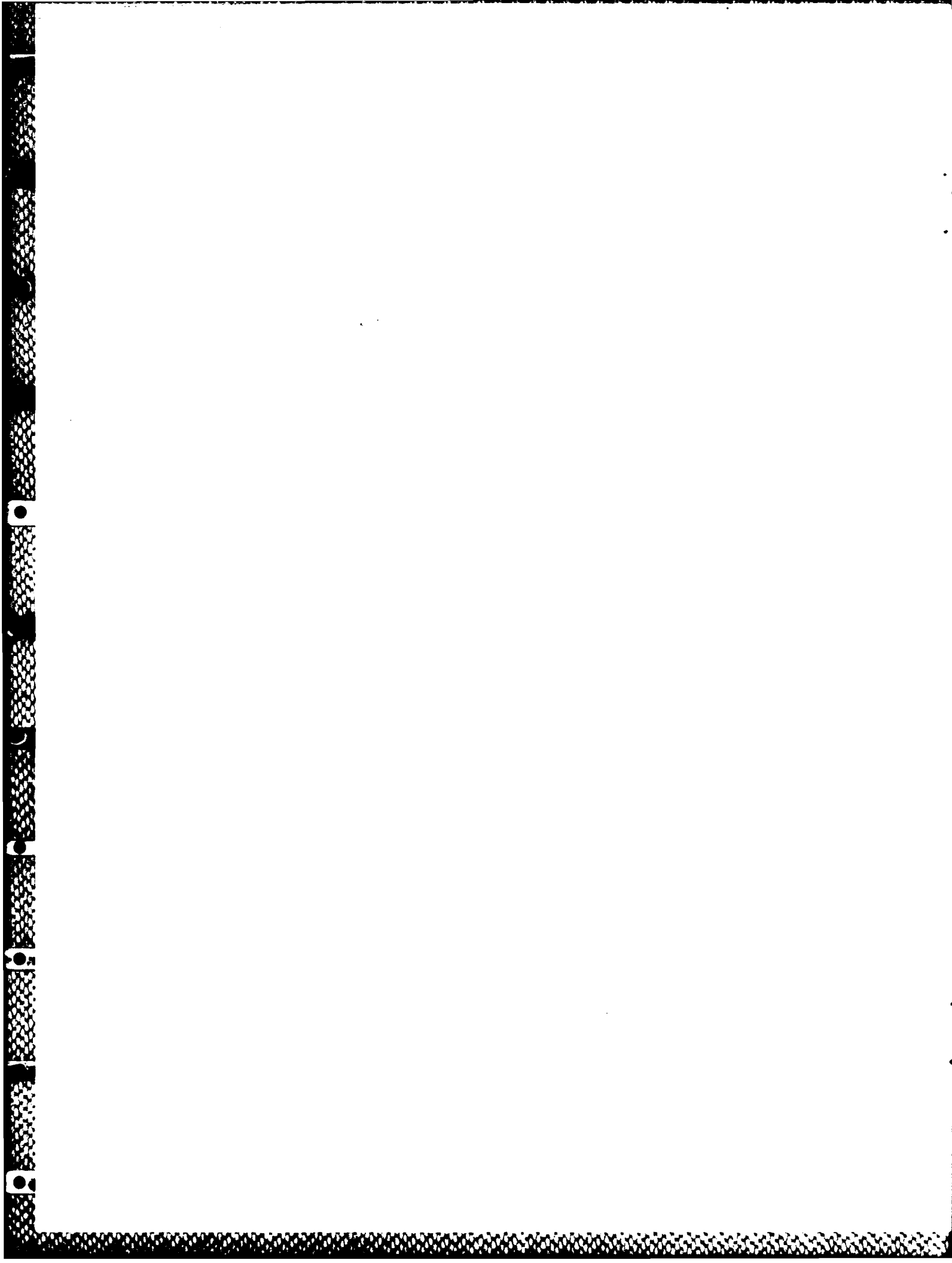
AUTHOR: Paul R. Holser, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A definition of an offensively oriented national strategy begins this case study of its applicability to Southeast Asia. The author provides background analysis of the region, hypothesises an offensive military strategy applied to the Vietnam War and concludes that strategic offense would have permitted victory. An analysis of the national interests, objectives and the current situation precedes a discussion of an offensive national strategy, called selective engagement. The author concludes that an offensive strategy would work and acknowledges the constraints on such a strategy.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Paul R. Holser (B.A. State University of New York at Buffalo) spent 1971 in South Vietnam as a helicopter gunship pilot following six months temporary duty bombing the Southeast Asian peninsula in B-52s. He has traveled in Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, and Australia. In 1982 he traveled extensively for the Strategic Air Command Inspector General as an operations and training inspector. He has served as the operations officer of the 20th Bombardment Squadron and the commander of the 7th Field Maintenance Squadron at Carswell. He is a graduate of Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and the Air War College, Class of 1987.



## CHAPTER I

### DEFINITION

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the possibility of developing a more offensively oriented national strategy. It is the author's contention that the containment policy followed by the United States in the Vietnam years limited the military strategy to the strategic defensive, and a change to the strategic offensive would have enabled the U.S. military to "win" the war. This strategic offensive thesis is explored in the section entitled Vietnam War Strategy.

To explore a more offensive national strategy upon which a strategic offensive military strategy must be based I have chosen to trace by case study of Southeast Asia the national interests, objectives, policy, and strategy that would underpin a military strategy for the region. A section on background of the region is included.

My definition of the strategic offensive encompasses both military and non-open conflict. In a non-open conflict the elements of power other than military force can be used to induce the opponents to change behavior by coercion, or creating the climate that makes the behavior you desire in the opponents' interests. In a military engagement forces are used to achieve political aims. The enemy's forces are engaged in a manner which defeats to the extent that continued resistance is foresaken and the will and means to

attack are destroyed. There are three doable objectives on the offensive. First, defeat the army or the military force. Second, occupy territory. Third, waste land, economy, and resources that support the military.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND

The purpose of this section of this paper is to survey the countries that make up the Southeast Asian peninsula area. The discussion has been limited to six countries, Vietnam, Thailand, Kampuchea (Cambodia), Laos, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Although there are other actors near to and in the region I have chosen to limit this background survey to the nations most proximate to and involved with the issues in the region. This discussion is necessarily limited by space and research time but for the purposes of this paper will focus on what the author feels is appropriate and most important about each nation. I have drawn heavily on background notes produced by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs and footnoted that at the end of each nation survey. Other references are footnoted as they occur in the text of the survey.

By far the most important actor nation on the Southeast Asian peninsula is Vietnam. I will cover very briefly the historical development of the nation, its people, culture and society. I will then discuss the basic economy, the political system and finally the military.

Vietnamese early history begins in 200 B.C. when the area was conquered by the Chinese. The region was under vassalage until the end of the 10th century. The first large

kingdom emerged around the 11th century with the Ly Dynasty. This was followed by the Trau Dynasty in the 13th century, and the Le Dynasty in the 15th through the 18th century. In the late 18th century the Le Dynasty broke up into the Trinh warlords of the northern provinces of Vietnam and the Nguyen Autocrats of the southern provinces. All through these periods borders come and go as invaders from China and from the west conquer and then are driven out of the area. The French colonized Vietnam in the 19th century and held it until 1954 except for the period of Japanese occupation during World War II.

Vietnam is populated by sixty one million racially mixed Indonesian and Malayan plains dwellers concentrated in the Mekong delta region and a few ethnic minorities left to populate the mountains and the plateaus. The cultural, linguistic and ethnic group Vietnam is Sinic and neo-confucian most closely aligned with China , Japan , and Korea. It is a society based on cooperative village organization which controls the management of irrigation systems, stores commodities for transportation or sale, and administers the village holdings.

Although village social structures varied in details from place to place the traditional Southeast Asian village had several common characteristics: (1) Kinship, particularly at the family level and to some degree at the extended levels, was a major force for social organization. (2) Most of the labor or productivity of the village was agricultural, such that handicrafts,

peddling, and other trades were given secondary status , and were often handled in transitory fashion by outsiders. (3) A sense of communal cooperation, extending beyond the immediate family, became an important means of attaining common goals and meeting local needs. And (4) this communalism enveloped or produced a set of cultural values and mores in which individualism was met with suspicion , whereas commitment to and sacrifice for the common good were more esteemed. (5:56)

Moreover this society is a war culture having continually fought off invasions from the north and east throughout its history . Since 1928 the Vietnamese have lost 1,760,100 killed in wars against Japanese, French , United States, and other forces. As this paper is being written the Vietnamese and the Chinese armies are clashing on the northern border of Vietnam.

The economy is primarily agricultural based on rice to feed the population. Industry is concentrated in the North where mills , factories and mines are located.

Politically it is a Marxist-Leninist regime strongly nationalist and heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union for arms and support. The Soviet Union provides one billion dollars annually in military aid.

Vietnam maintains the "world's fourth largest military establishment. Of the total armed forces numbering 1,227,000 in 1984 , the People's Army numbered 1 million." (11:190) Vietnamese perceive themselves as "surrounded by enemies." (11:190) Their goal is to establish Vietnamese hegemony over the region by federated client regimes or "Vietnamization in

the form of settlement and eventual absorption of Laos and Cambodia" . (11:193)

Thailand is the next most important nation on the peninsula. Its early history is a continuous struggle for territory and power among the Malay, Tai, Men, and Khmer people. The Tai Kingdom emerged in the 13th century; however by the 18th century the Burmese had conquered the Tai . The founder of the present dynasty drove out the Burmese in 1782. "It is a great source of pride to the Thai that theirs is the only country in South and Southeast Asia never colonized by European powers". (24:4) In 1941 they were occupied by the Japanese and became closely related to the United States after the war because of aid.

The regime is a constitutional monarchy and the present constitution was written in 1978. The population is 85% homogenous Thai, heavily rural , urbanly centered at Bangkok, and rapidly expanding in numbers because of high birth rates. The culture is tribal and the linguistic and ethnic groupings are indo chinese combinations. The economy is primarily agriculture , consisting of rice, corn, rubber, and sugarcane. Thailand has a free enterprise system with minimal central control in the form of tax incentives and banking regulations. The economy is experiencing a period of very slow growth because many of the markets for



agricultural commodities in other countries have been lost.  
(10:180,181) Tourism and foreign investment are very  
important to the economy.

The Thai military totals 241,000 , the majority of which  
are in the army. (163,000) Twenty-one percent of the GNP is  
budgeted for defense, and the Thais are heavily dependent on  
the United States Foreign Military Sales program to modernize  
their equipment. " Military ties are central to the United  
States relationship with Thailand. The United States has a  
security commitment to Thailand under the Manila Treaty of  
1954 and the Rusk-Thanat agreement of 1962,..." (22:404)  
Since the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, the big  
interest of the Thais has been concentrated on the eastern  
border.

Thailand found itself confronting Vietnamese  
soldiers at its borders and within its territories.  
Vietnamese incursions into Thai territories were  
frequent and potentially explosive. .... The  
potential for escalation of the military conflict  
is still an important national security  
concern. (10:179)

Moreover the United States has increased the speed and amount  
of military equipment deliveries to Thailand since the  
invasion of Kampuchea. (24)

The small and largely forgotten nation of Laos was first  
united as a kingdom in 1353 and was called Lan Xang (million  
elephants) . By the 19th century after three centuries of  
dynastic struggle between Laos' neighbors for control of

Laos the Siamese dominated most of the land. They were replaced by the French in 1899. The Japanese occupied Laos in World War II and the French returned after the war but granted Laos independence in 1949. The governments, many in number as Laotian politics were unstable, were pro western until 1960 when a neutralist regime under the leadership of Souvana Phouma came to power. This lasted until 1975 when the communist Lao People's Revolutionary Republic was established.

The small population of Laos is concentrated along the Mekong River. Since the transformation of Laos to a socialist state many thousands have fled to Thailand to escape "reeducation". Estimates show that about 10% of the Lao population have sought refugee status abroad since 1975. Most have gone to northeast Thailand. The culture, linguistic, and ethnic grouping of Laos is tribal and indo-chinese combinations. Ethnic Laotians are primarily in the lowlands and tribal Khmer and Mon people remain in the mountains. Some ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese populate the cities.

The regime is Marxist-Leninist, decidedly dependent on the Vietnamese occupation force of 50,000 to control a low level factional insurgency. It controls an underdeveloped economy based largely on subsistence agriculture and limited transportation. Food is imported from Thailand and hydro electric power is exported in exchange. (25)

Kampuchea (Cambodia) is the focal point of the third Indochinese war which will be discussed below. In the first century a powerful kingdom called Funan was founded and continued until it was succeeded in the sixth century by the Chenla. Subsequent dynastic battles divided the nation until the Angkor Empire began in the 9th century. In the 12th century Angkor Wat, the "greatest single architectural masterpiece in Southeast Asia", was built along with an extensive irrigation system. Until the 19th century when the French protectorate was established Cambodia was a battleground for Vietnamese and Siamese and Lao armies expanding their territories. The French, although they stabilized the borders, did little to develop the nation. By and large Cambodia served as a source of agricultural commodities and a customer for French products. The Japanese occupied Cambodia in 1941. The French granted limited independence to Cambodia in 1946 and full independence in 1953.

The regimes of Sihanouk tried to remain neutralist with communist leanings. The use of Cambodia as sanctuary for North Vietnamese insurgents, U.S. air raids and growing dissatisfaction with Sihanouk's policies brought Lon Nol to power. In 1975 the communist Khmer Rouge destroyed the Lon Nol government and began a bloodbath to restructure the society. Thousands died as the regime evacuated the cities to collectivize the nation's agriculture and destroyed all

remnants of the previous regime by public execution and torture. In 1978 Vietnam invaded Kampuchea and installed a client regime under Heng Samrin called the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The government is reliant on Vietnamese advisors at all levels and faces opposition from Khmer nationalists. The total armed forces of Kampuchea is an army of 35,000. (32:158) Although the Vietnamese occupation force of between 150,000 and 200,000 controls most of the country and its six million inhabitants, a coalition force of 65,000 composed of Khmer Rouge, non-communist resistance groups and Sihanouk loyalists is growing. Seasonal campaigns continue along the Thai border where the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea operates.

As noted above there are two governments competing for control of the Kampuchean nation. One is Communist, Vietnamese-dominated and the other, a coalition of opponents. Kampuchean nationalism and anti-Vietnamese feelings among the populace contribute to the increasing difficulty of controlling the whole country.

The economy is primarily agricultural, producing rice, sugar, and rubber. Industry was abandoned in 1975 and will be difficult to reestablish. Kampuchea is dependent on eastern bloc aid and trade. Until the Vietnamese withdraw there is little hope for an improvement in relations with neighboring nations or the West. Of paramount importance is the presence of several hundred thousand Kampuchean refugees

in camps along the the Thai- Kampuchea border and the strong Vietnamese military presence threatening the Thais .

The Kampuchean problem drains the Vietnamese of resources and makes Soviet access to the region much more likely. Dependence on eastern bloc support in both Kampuchea and Vietnam threatens the stability of the region and raises the potential for superpower conflict there. (23)

At the southern edge of the region as defined by this report are Malaysia and Indonesia. Both nations are muslim by majority , multi-ethnic democracies, each with growing economies. Each has a large income from exported petroleum production. As littoral states they benefit from access to western markets and a positive trade imbalance with their major trading partners, the United States and Japan. "The ability of the United States to send warships through the vital Southeast Asian straits in a crisis depends ultimately on the consent of these littoral states." (22:403) Malaysia's population numbers about 16 million and Indonesia is ten times more populous with 173 million. Each faces a small communist guerilla insurgency . However the military establishments in each are very small, each preferring to develop the economy over defense forces. ( 30,31 ) "The littoral members of ASEAN , unlike the Philippines and Thailand, have no mutual security agreements with the United

States and belong to the nonaligned bloc in world politics."

(22:403)

## CHAPTER III

### A VIETNAM WAR STRATEGY

The war in Vietnam could have been won if there had been a change in national policy which would have allowed a strategic offensive. I will define the strategic positions that are possible, and determine what the United States strategy was as a result of its national policy. I will then examine what a change in policy would have implied for the nation's military strategy in the air, on the ground, and in the combined arena. The effect on public opinion and estimated results will also be examined.

According to Clausewitz, "...tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of the war."(1:128) In his book Col Summers makes a strong case for the position that the "...United States entered the Vietnam war on the strategic defensive."(2:69) This was because the national policy stopped short of rollback or liberation in opposing communist aggression. "...our failure to appreciate what this strategic posture entailed contributed to our ultimate failure."(2:69) What are the strategic and tactical options in war? Moreover, what are the likely results of these options? A chart included in Col Summers' book is particularly illuminating because it gives a clear and concise representation of the options and their associated results.

	Strategic defensive & tactical defensive	Strategic defensive & tactical offensive	OPTIONS
	Complete absence of a decision.	Victory on the field of battle without general results for the campaign or war.	RESULTS
-	Strategic offensive & tactical defensive	Strategic offensive & tactical offensive	OPTIONS
-	General situation favorable for a victory, which ,however, is without results because the fighting power of the enemy is not impaired.	Destruction of the enemy, conquest of his territory.	RESULTS

(2:68)

It is clear from the chart above that a victory is only possible on the strategic offensive. The strategic offensive is that plan of engagements which "...leads directly to the political objective-- the purpose for which the war is being waged." (2:67)

Let us assume the United States was willing to risk the strategic offensive in Southeast Asia. What are the implications of this decision? First and most important it allows a political military objective. Our goal to save South Vietnam could have included unifying the two



Vietnams under a coalition government. It has been said "that the single greatest failure of the American effort in South Vietnam was that it did not succeed in its original purpose of taking away a nationalist revolution from the Communists." (6:3) The military strategy to achieve this goal would be to attack the North Vietnamese Army, occupy territory, or attack the will to resist by wastage of the land to cause political repercussions.

The air strategy is immediately expanded in the area of targetry. Air defenses, army posts, supply depots, government control centers, surgical air strikes to affect public opinion all open up in North Vietnam. There is no sanctuary. Ports are mined. All means of weakening the military are exploited. Radio stations, power generating plants, airfields, railroads, bridges, canals, all lines of communication that contribute to the north's war effort become exploitable. The North Vietnamese were beaten and broken by the Rolling Thunder campaign in 1967.

The strength of the American bombing campaign of summer 1967 had rested not only on its weight but on its consistency, hour after hour, day after day. The strategy, as well as damaging or destroying -- in ports, on railway lines, and on storage areas-- the capacity of the D.R.V to feed itself and to maintain the invasion, had also for the first time, allowed the North Vietnamese no time to repair war-making facilities. No sooner were they repaired than they were struck again; Tonkinese ingenuity had been defeated and, by the remorseless persistence of the campaign, their will eroded to near-extinction. (35:153)

For whatever reasons this persistent pressure was eased to allow a diplomatic effort to negotiate the end of the war. The effect of being on the initiative and the element of persistence could be decisive in the air strategy.

The strategy for the combined forces of South Vietnam and the United States is also significantly affected. A raiding strategy to attack the North Vietnamese Army in the homeland would have forced North Vietnam to draw troops out of South Vietnam to protect the homeland. There would be no sanctuaries for the North Vietnamese government or the army. A combined effort of the allies to reunite the two Vietnams would place North Vietnam on the defensive. A stated reunification goal could have undermined the Hanoi government's ability to appeal to the nationalism of the people to endure the tremendous hardships that the war caused. The issue then could have become the Hanoi government not the Saigon regime's longevity. This is significant because the driving force behind the North Vietnamese attacks on the South Vietnamese was reunification.

A few words about the ground strategy are in order. Moving to the strategic offense by attacking North Vietnam permits our troops in the south to go on the tactical defensive. By many accounts pacification in the south had worked. Reports indicate that perhaps as few as 20% of the combatants were Viet Cong during the Tet offensive in 1968.

Moreover, the results of the Tet offensive were the culminating point of victory. We had defeated the North Vietnamese Army in the south and we could have moved from the strategic defensive to the strategic offensive. In North Vietnam a Blitzkrieg offensive was possible. It would have required great courage and planning. The terrain would have been difficult to hold. However population centers and transportation systems could have been seized. Casualties would have been higher. But, with the air campaign unfettered, an occupation army might have had an easy campaign. Maneuver, mass, and economy of force all could have been applied to achieve the destruction of the North Vietnamese Army. Occupation of Hanoi and removal of the government were possible on the strategic offensive.

The question of how to justify this action to the public in the United States would not have been difficult. People would have understood a counterattack on an army that had invaded an ally and indeed had attacked our troops, who were defending themselves. There are those who would argue that an invasion of North Vietnam would eventually require invasions of Laos and Cambodia. A decisive defeat of the North Vietnamese quite possibly would require such cleanup operations. Instead of confusing the people with counterinsurgency theory and body counts that made no sense, we needed to identify the real enemy during Tet. It was the invading North

Vietnamese. The war at the point of Tet was not an insurgency nor had it been. The war was an invasion of one country by the army of another. The public saw through a strategic defensive posture that allowed no victory. That strategy allowed sanctuaries for the enemy, and limited our combatants with outrageous rules of engagement. The public would have supported a war that conceivably could be won in a reasonably short period of time. Tet could have been compared to Pearl Harbor. War could have been declared in the Congress. Mobilization would have been the natural next step. Since deference had failed, a move to the strategic offensive at the opportune time would have been appropriate to achieve a victory.

What would victory have looked like? As we have seen from the table above, a strategic defensive victory is impossible. The key is to be strong enough to be on the strategic offensive and to force the enemy at the culminating point of victory to assume the strategic defensive. The defeat of the North Vietnamese Army and occupation of Hanoi could have forced the North Vietnamese government to surrender. We could have used our actions in Japan following World War II as a model to rebuild Vietnam. A coalition government could have been formed with Ho Chi Minh positioned as a symbol without power. Occupation could have been brief but effective.

A raiding strategy to defeat the North Vietnamese

Army by an offensive campaign in the north meets the requirement that wars have a clear, understandable, measurable objective. What would it have cost? Surely the cost would have been more in American lives after Tet in 1968. But in terms of the health of the nation, its psyche, and the lost lives of our friends who trusted us in the South Vietnam, the alternative we followed was more expensive. We had forgotten that wars are won on the offensive.

Clausewitz is loud and clear on this.

If defense is the stronger form of war, yet has a negative object, it follows that it should be used only so long as weakness compels, and be abandoned as soon as we are strong enough to pursue a positive object. When one has used defensive measures successfully, a more favorable balance of strength is usually created; thus, the natural course in war is to begin defensively and end by attacking. It would therefore contradict the very idea of war to regard defense as its final purpose, .....a war in which victories were used only defensively without the intention of counterattacking would be as absurd as a battle in which the principle of absolute defense-- passivity, that is-- were to dictate every action. (1:358)

Thus we can see, as Clausewitz would have seen, the Vietnam war could have been won if national policy changed to allow the strategic offensive. An offensive strategy, which attacks the army in the north at the culminating

point of victory, is the right and natural thing to do. It is a strategy that provides for the use of engagements to achieve political objectives.

## CHAPTER IV

### UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTERESTS

This section of this study will examine the United States' national interests in the region. The United States has economic, political, and military interests that relate to its national security and the interests of the allies. Of the four basic American interests, defense of the homeland, economic well being, favorable world order, and promotion of values, all are involved at the major or vital level in Southeast Asia.

Geographically the region is crucial because the sea lanes of communication, the Straits of Malacca, for force projection and trade are vital to maritime powers like the United States and to American maritime strategy. Hegemonic control of the region by one power would allow unimpeded interdiction of the Straits. "The ability of the United States to send warships through the vital Southeast Asian straits in a crisis depends ultimately on the consent of those littoral states." (22:403) Therefore a balance of power in the region is extremely important to the national security of the United States. A power hegemony in the region could well expel the United States to Hawaii and grant to the Soviet Union the ability for force projection and access to the southern Chinese frontier it desires. (14:183) The Soviet Union has developed a series of bases and ports that stretch in and arc around the Asian continent. These enhance its

ability to promote instability and Russian influence in the world as well as the ability to flank China as necessary. It is absolutely vital to the United States , regional allies and even China that hostile regimes not obtain hegemonic control of this region.

Our military interests in the region include support of our allies and countering threats to their security and our bases. "Our military facilities in the Philippines enable us to protect vital lines of communication in the region and to counterbalance the growing military power of the Soviet Union and its surrogates." (28:3) We need secure routes for naval power projection to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. "Our vital basing rights and port access are critical to maintaining overall strategic balance and peace in the region, by insuring U.S. operational ability, maneuverability and accessibility in the event of crisis." (26:2) And , we need to protect Japanese interests since they are constitutionally limited in this area. We must not have another Vietnam in which the military is used to send signals in a creeping gradualism that eroded our national will. Moreover, the growth of Soviet military presence in the region threatens our security and that of our allies. The Soviet buildup of forces in the region includes expansion of the facilities in Vietnam , "extending the reach of Soviet naval forces in the West Pacific and Indian Oceans." (29:2)



The interests of Japan, Australia, India, Thailand, and the other members of ASEAN are of major importance to the United States. Japan is heavily dependent on the sea lanes of the Straits of Malacca for access to middle east oil and access to raw materials and markets of Southeast Asia. Australia is vitally interested that Southeast Asia and especially Indonesia remain independent of any major power and not hostile. (14:182) The trade routes to Europe, Japan, and the United States are important to Australia. India, a sometime ally and most time semi-nonaligned nation, would keep her namesake ocean open and free to commerce and not dominated by any single potentially hostile power. India also wants independent Afghanistan and Burma as buffer states to the large menace to the north. (14:182) Thailand is critical to the region because of its proximity. Resolution of the Kampuchean situation is crucial to Thai security. Withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, independence and a coalition government in Kampuchea is an interest of the Thais, the United States, Australia, and the members of ASEAN.

Economically the fast developing and potential economies of the moderate and authoritarian nations of the region represent new markets for American and allied trade goods as well as a source of raw materials and commodities. With a combined real growth rate of over seven percent per year during the 1970's, and with a total gross national product of over \$100 billion, the ASEAN region has become the

fifth largest trading partner of the United States." (22:401) Oil , tin, rubber and other raw materials can be and are traded in the region. They are exchanged for machinery, technology, and other manufactured goods. Many parts of this region have not been touched by the industrial revolution. The free market for American know-how and manufactured goods can greatly expand.

The major political interest of the United States in Southeast Asia is to stabilize the developing nations that are vulnerable to the destabilizing efforts of the avowed Marxist-Leninists. "The United States does support, as a matter of principle, peaceful democratic evolution and the rule of law throughout the world." (26:2) The Marxist-Leninist ideological desire to expand political control threatens moderate democratic governments that support social justice and individual freedoms. Our belief in those values as well as private property, civil liberty, pluralism, and peaceful reformism demand that we promote those values abroad. Respect for political sovereignty of non-aggressor states is essential if the rule of law in the world is going to survive.

Thus we have seen the interests of the United States are very much involved in the region no matter how bitter our memories of the Vietnam conflict. Nine presidents have had to consider the region important since the United States emerged as a global power after World War II. (14:178) Today the

United States has political, economic, and strategic military interests in the region that are threatened by the potential hegemonic control of the region by the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER V

### SITUATION FORECAST AND US NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this section is to assess the current situation in the region and forecast the situation in the future. The five major players in the region will be analysed and then some generalisations for the future and some objectives will be explored.

Vietnam is by far the pivotal actor. Its stagnating economy, increasing dependence on the Soviet Union and expanding militarization of its people will lead to a focus on expansion to support the regime and the growth of the party. Laos, the sleepy no growth client of Vietnam, will continue to serve as an infiltration route as it has in the past. Its long border with Thailand will permit Vietnamese military initiatives and the export of instability. In Kampuchea the unrest and instability created by the flight of refugees to Thailand, and the seasonal campaigns of the Vietnamese occupation forces will eventually result in continued death and destruction of the Cambodian people. The economy is in shambles and there is little hope that it can improve even if the coalition of rebels were defeated. The refugee problem and potential border clashes with Thailand make increased instability and conflict inevitable. There is the real potential "of a major Vietnamese thrust in to Thailand in order to destroy Pol Pot's forces;.... (22:438) The Thais, traditionally a diplomatically agile nation, will

face growing pressures on the economy from increased demands on the government by the military for resources to expend for defense. Internal groups supported by the Vietnamese will exploit the situation as poverty , hunger , disease, and underdevelopment are breeding grounds for Marxist-Leninist ideology to take hold. There will be increased pressure on the Thais to follow an appeasement or accommodation policy toward the Vietnamese and on the Soviets. In Indonesia and Malaysia, their growing economies will be hard pressed to support the more rapidly growing , culturally diverse, and frighteningly dense population.

Although there are people who deplore approaching the region solely in terms of an East-West , U.S.-USSR zero sum game, there is in my mind a lot to be said for that perspective. Moreover, the domino theory has been alive and well on the Southeast Asian peninsula since the departure of American troops from Saigon. The evidence is irrefutable. There can be little doubt that Thailand is next in the chain of dominoes slated to fall to the communists. In 1965 the Chinese foreign minister proclaimed the eventual fall of Thailand. (14:189) The Soviet Union is opportunistic and tenacious as it seeks to exploit and influence conflicts that break out in the third world.

"The fundamental design of those who control the Soviet Union and the international communist movement is to retain and solidify their absolute power,....The design , therefore calls for the

complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and their replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin. To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward domination of the Eurasian land mass." (9:54)

The Soviet Union seeks to exploit perceptions of its strength and American weakness. The United States has been embarrassed in Angola, Ethiopia became a Soviet satellite, and the Vietnamese toppled the Cambodian regime ;" ...between 1975 and 1980 seven pro-Soviet communist or radical leftist regimes came to power by armed force, most of them as a result of civil wars or coups in which Soviet supplied weaponry was prominently involved." (16:255) There can be little doubt, moreover, that civil wars , riots, strikes, and instability in third world friendly nations threaten the United States' interests.

Historically the attempts at hegemonic control of the region date back to the ancient dynastic wars. In this century Japan nearly achieved it in the early forties. Communist efforts began in 1945 with guerilla warfare in Indochina, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. After the successful Chinese revolution in 1949 ,and the Korean conflict in the early fifties, the Soviets began supporting the North Vietnamese effort to take over the South Vietnamese. The Soviet Union began in 1969 to develop a collective security system that includes pacts with Asian , Middle East , and African countries. (14:190) In 1964 they

began a systematic program of port visits to third world countries. (16:260) The USSR has established bases from the South China Sea to the western coasts of the Indian Ocean and the Persian gulf. Most recently the Russians have positioned themselves at Cam Rahn Bay and DaNang, provided support for the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, and significantly increased the size and number of Soviet naval operations in the Indian Ocean. The Soviets have built an entire blue water navy since 1961. (16:266) Moreover they have developed well equipped airborne divisions and have the capability to project them within a 2000 mile radius of Soviet controlled air fields. (16:260) The ideology of the communists and the growth of their military presence and influence in the region threaten the interests of the United States and our allies.

But two facts should be remembered. First the Communists, unlike ourselves, are patient, persevering, and stubborn in pursuing their long run strategies; and second, there is no power capable of preventing the Soviet Union from dominating Southeast Asia--Indeed, all of Asia--except the United States. Asia would promptly become a quite different place if the United States closed down Clark Field and Subic Bay, pulled the Pacific Fleet back to Hawaii, and announced that the guarantees to Thailand were no longer operative. (14:193)

If our strategic posture does not change, predicting the future in the region is quite unsettling. There is a clear danger that the entire peninsula will be communized under Vietnamese control and Soviet Union influence. We could see expanded basing and portage agreements for the Russians .

There will probably be greater pressure on moderate and democratic regimes. Thailand can easily become embroiled in a Vietnamese-supported insurgency. Indonesia will undoubtedly be threatened by the pressure of its growing and diverse population and the external threat. Increased Russian influence will result in reluctance of nations to allow overflight, portage, and basing for the United States military. If we are expelled from the Clark and Subic facilities, it will result in higher cost and less capability in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf.

Based on the forecast above it is important that some desirable objectives for the region be stipulated. The United States objectives for the region will be discussed in three groups. An overview group of three will be followed by four, more specific objectives that follow from the first group. Finally the ultimate objective for the region will be suggested.

The overview grouping consists of three broadly stated objectives. The first is regional economic growth and political stability for friendly and moderate nations. Second is to promote values of private property, civil liberty, free markets, pluralism, peaceful change, and the rule of law. A third aim is to secure access to the Persian Gulf from the Pacific.

To accomplish the above there are four more specific goals to be met. Most importantly, Thailand's sovereignty



must be supported by policies that strengthen the economy and bolster U.S. alliance responsibilities. Next we need a resolution of the Kampuchean question that replaces the Vietnamese occupation government with a moderate regime , freely elected without interference by the Vietnamese or the Khmer Rouge . Third , the U.S. needs to develop even stronger trade relationships with the nations of ASEAN which will expand our markets and access to raw materials. Lastly, we need to reduce the Soviet presence in the region by replacing the Soviet client regime in Hanoi with a moderate or rightist regime.

The ultimate goal is an entire Southeast Asian peninsula with independent stable , moderate governments based on individual rights and social justice.

## CHAPTER VI

### ELEMENTS OF POWER AND NATIONAL STRATEGY

The national strategy of flexible response is defensive in nature. An offensive strategy of selective employment of the elements of power permits victory over the communists. The elements of power employable by the United States are political, economic, geographic, psychosocial, science and technology, and military. Although the elements are interrelated they will be separated for the purposes of discussion. If the elements of power are used correctly in an offensive strategy, we will not be condemned to being pecked to death all over the world as we are in the defensive strategy of flexible response. Selective employment of the elements of power will be the key to achieving our national objectives.

An analysis of our objectives earlier in this study reveals that we seek no empire. Rather we seek a pluralist world where our values are respected and shared. On the other hand our principal opposition in the world, the Soviet Union, by its ideology and actions seeks empire and doggedly pursues opposing values. I am advocating an offensive strategy of selective employment to reach our objectives and vision for the world. Because the United States does not seek empire and chooses to pursue pluralist values, we must develop strategies that go beyond our own efforts to counter hostile ideas, actions and values by enlisting developing

nations in a common vision and helping them grow and prosper. Selective employment means that time, place, element, and threat are considered in choosing how elements of national power will be engaged. The important distinction here is that the engagements are consciously designed to support the offensively oriented strategy at the appropriate time. This section of the paper will not assess the timing of employment of the elements of national power. However, it will analyse the regional applicability of the elements in a national strategy for the region.

This analysis will not treat the nuclear element of military national power. Granted the United States is a superpower capable of obliterating an enemy, We do not intend to use that power except as deterrent for others' use of nuclear weapons. This study will deal with non-nuclear only.

The political element of power has two parts , control and leadership. Although the United States does not have control of the actions of the regional actors , the United States does have considerable influence in the world. The United States' influence in international organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Court, the World Bank, can be used to pressure national actors, Vietnam in particular, as well as Kampuchea and Laos, to refrain from provocative aggression or subversive support of insurgents against its neighbors. The menu of actions which can be taken would include denying of a representative seat for an applicant ,

imposing sanctions on aggressor nations, and proposing various United Nations resolutions to condemn preemptive aggression. Diplomatic expressions of support for the defending side and denunciation of the attacking side can affect world opinion, which we need. In addition, public and private expressions of support in speeches and communiques can have positive effects on the opinion of world leaders and the people they represent. A visit by high-level leadership and cabinet officials can also serve to cement bonds of relationships and bolster the confidence of the visited nation and its leader.

An important part of the United States offensive strategy would be to find leadership in developing nations. Authoritarian leaders use force to achieve and maintain power. We need to find and cultivate leaders that share the United States' vision of a pluralist world. These men should be strong personalities like Deng Xiaoping and Ho Chi Minh to develop the third world nations. In the past dependence on personalities has been high, and political institutions have been weak, and the military have played crucial leadership roles. (37:11) This will require careful study of cultures, values, and beliefs to determine the right leaders. Then, careful positioning will be needed to influence this factor.

The economic element of power has three facets of importance to this analysis. The first facet is the development of the economies of the third world nations.

Electricity and clean water are vital to the development of towns, cities, and modern economies. The United States has exportable expertise in these kinds of projects as well as health care, transportation, and housing systems. Many of these projects can be financed by developing raw materials resources by importing extraction technologies. Our abilities in the development of markets, transportation systems, and communication systems can contribute to commerce and economic development.

The second economic facet is the trade relationship of the regional nations with the United States. Long-term growth and healthy economies are based on mixed exports of raw materials and manufactured goods as well as imports from other industrial nations. The wealth of the developing nations cannot be sustained forever by extraction and export of mineral and energy resources. We cannot treat third world nations like colonies. It is important that protectionist trade barriers are not erected on either side that inhibit growth. Moreover, multi-national corporations can exert tremendous pressures on the developing nations. We need to control their influence to insure economic development, industrialisation, and trade are not heavily balanced away from the interests of the developing nation. While the above measures for development serve as strengtheners of our allies, these measures can also be used as incentives for behavior modification by others.

The third facet is the effects of United States capitalisation of the developing nations' economies. This can be by grants, or loans direct to the government concerned, or by incentives for private investment in allied nation enterprises. United States contributions to the regional development banks can increase the capital available to these small nations. Concessional assistance could also be used as an incentive for unfriendly regimes. Unfortunately third world debtors very much resent austerity measures sometimes attached to continuing loan programs or restructuring of debt by international lending institutions. However, capital for development is a lever of power that can be used to strengthen allies and influence others. Moreover, the spread of democracy can be enhanced by providing relief aid for the refugees from Laos and Kampuchea. The influx of refugees places a strain on the Thai resources and humanitarian aid for these unfortunates will help sustain our values of social justice and human rights.

The psychosocial element of power concerns the cohesiveness of the society. Our pluralist nature makes us appear to be weak and lacking in cohesiveness. Just the opposite is true. We are strong because of our pluralism. Our strength comes from bonding together for the common good, protecting the rights of individuals, and supporting strategies that reduce the threat to our liberties. Our vision for the world nations matches this pattern. Marxists,

on the other hand, have a vision diametrically opposed. Soviet internationalism is an oxymoron and must be recognised as such. Our policies and strategies have sent mixed signals to the public on the threat of Marxist-Leninism. To exploit the psychosocial element of power we need propaganda, education, and civic action.

It is time to begin a large propaganda program in this country and the world to counter Marxist-Leninist ideology and expose its inhumanities and failures. The ideology is appealing to simple minds and is an effective tool for ruthless politically motivated zealots. We need arguments exposing its weaknesses and failures that are understandable and appealing to third world cultures and our own. We need publicity that exposes communist violations of universal and international law, as well as publicity for Soviet links in aggression such as troops , advisors , and equipment. The signals we send must be loud and clear: the United States stands for human rights and social justice, the Soviet system does not.

Education in this country for third world intellectuals can lead to greater understanding of our values and vision. Moreover, it can influence the leadership of third world nations. As mentioned earlier, finding leaders, cultivating them and supporting their development efforts will strengthen the political element as well as the cohesiveness in the developing nations.

The last segment of the psychosocial element of power is action. The cultures, religions, demographics, and values of the developing nations must be understood and integrated in all of our actions to ensure our actions do not provoke negative reactions. Programs like the Peace Corps are marvelous for influencing the village people, but the wrong actions can be detrimental to our influence in building the developing nations. It may be necessary for the developing nation to find its own form of economy and society, sometimes including a mix of capitalist and socialist features. If the commonality that makes the nation a nation is emphasised and nurtured the society will gain in cohesiveness and be stronger in the psychosocial element of power against Marxist-Leninist advances.

The science and technology element of power is where the United States has enjoyed considerable advantages over the rest of the world. It contributes to the other elements of power in many ways, not the least of which is building national pride from such projects as the space program. There are literally millions of spinoff products from that effort that affect our daily lives with their gadgetry and magic. Our willingness to share that technology and know-how will be a significant factor in the developing nations of the region. Our know-how in agriculture can be applied to help nations that are not food self-sufficient become so. Hybrid plant varieties, irrigation and drainage technologies, and



our machinery and chemicals can be supplied to those who need them. The intelligence that we gain from satellites can be shared for military security and weather forecasting. Other areas in which we can help the developing states are health care services, population growth studies, engineering for road building, and dams and power plants.

The military element of national power could be applied to the region in a strategy of selective engagement. The applicability of United States military power for the regional actors is twofold, the preparation of allies for action, called active deterrence, and the reactions to aggression if deterrence fails, called military offensive.

To prepare for action in the region we can build the military capabilities of our allies and enhance our abilities to project military force. We accomplish the first by arms sales and shipments, military consultations and intelligence sharing, and education and training for allied forces. To enhance our abilities to project military force, we obtain basing, overflight rights, and portage agreements.

Australia, Thailand and Indonesia could potentially help us in this area. Facilities in these countries to replace or supplement Clark and Subic Bay would significantly improve our ability to help our allies. The security of the region can be enhanced by gaining mutual security agreements with the regional actors ideally in a collective pact under the ASEAN umbrella or secondarily in bilateral arrangements. The

role of the Japanese military for defense should be increased. They lack a force projection capability beyond one thousand miles and spend a very small percentage of their gross national product on defense. This would reduce the need for United States forces that presently guarantee Japanese security. Additionally, we conduct combined military exercises in the region to evaluate and improve our allies and our capabilities. This requires passive deployment of our naval and tactical forces on selective occasions. The potential for actual engagement could be high. There would need to be rules of engagement, clearance to defend our forces, authority to act quickly, and the will to carry out an offensive should deterrence fail.

Should deterrence fail, there are three levels of United States military employment. Choosing the right military action requires intelligence, forethought, planning, and will. The menu of actions from the most desirable to the least desirable is to commit United States resources to equip the ally, to provide advisors for our ally, and finally to engage the enemy as a combined force with United States military people as combatants.

There are four pre-positioning steps for this strategy. The first is to prepare for the defense of Thailand at any of the three levels of involvement discussed above. If the Kampuchean problem spills over into Thailand, there must be forces and plans ready to execute an offensive military

strategy in line with the national strategy. The capabilities of the Thais to defend themselves with or without our help must be supported by continued military sales of technologically advanced weaponry. Exercises of combined nature need to be conducted to demonstrate resolve and capability to honor our treaty commitments. The second step is to reduce the influence of the Soviets by ensuring the United States military force structure is positioned and ready to counter Soviet naval and air forces stationed at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang. Third, a program to supply arms and equipment to the non-communist rebels in Kampuchea must begin. Our help has been limited to "humanitarian and political" aid in the past. (29:3) Fourth, we need to encourage the Chinese to put pressure on the Vietnamese northern border. This diverts roughly half of the Vietnamese one million man army and many resources away from the Kampuchean problem, our most likely point of engagement.

As this study was begun, I had in mind a rough outline of a scenario to achieve the above objectives with military power. It went like this:

1. A U.S. presence in Thailand exists, we supply help, equipment.
2. The Vietnamese invade Thailand to engage the rebels sanctuaried there. Thai troops are engaged and ask for U.S help.

3. We implement our plans for bolstering the Thais' defense. We combine forces and clear out the Vietnamese.
4. We pursue into Cambodia and defeat the Vietnamese.
5. We restore the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.
6. We remove the puppet regime in Cambodia and hold free elections.
7. We develop the economy, and defense of Cambodia.
8. We withdraw. If provoked we start the cycle again.

For the United States to succeed in this scenario a force of approximately 150,000 to 200,000 would be required. A force mix of at least four army divisions, including light infantry and rangers, a marine amphibious group task force, one carrier battle group, and appropriate theater air assets would operate in concert with the 35,000 Kampuchean rebel forces and 50,000 Thai forces. An amphibious assault on the southern coast by the Marines would be followed by attacks from the north and west by Thai, rebel, and American army forces moving quickly to the capital, Phnom Penh. Air strikes will support the advancing allied forces and interdict the enemy supply lines.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

There are constraints on these responses. An important one is the tendency of our forces to be held hostage to Europe or to the allies. It is also important not to be threatening to smaller nonaligned nations. Moreover, in the pluralist society, which we are, a consensus is difficult to achieve and hold. Gradualism of the ilk followed in our last engagement in the region would not work. The public may not support overt military actions in the region, the costs are high, and the allies' fears will limit their support. "In coping with dictatorial governments acting in secrecy and with speed, we are also vulnerable in that the democratic process necessarily operates in the open and at a deliberate tempo." (9:70) The memory of the Vietnam years lead to the War Powers Act which severely limits the executive branch of the government from conducting acts of war.

"Under the War Powers Resolution, the president must consult with Congress 'in every possible instance' before introducing the armed forces 'into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.' Under section 4(a)(1), the president must report to Congress on the status of U.S. troops in such situations. Section 5(b) requires the president to withdraw such troops within 60 to 90 days unless Congress authorizes their continued presence. He must in any case withdraw them immediately if directed to do so by a concurrent congressional resolution, which is not subject to a presidential veto." (38:134)

Those memories of spent blood and treasure could lead to a congressional demand to withdraw military forces without regard to the circumstances. "A democracy can compensate for its natural vulnerability only if it maintains clearly superior overall power in its most inclusive sense." (9:70)

Because we failed to win the war the first time whether from flawed strategy of passive defense, or gradualism in our commitment to the air offensive in the north, or over-Americanization of the war, as suggested by General Palmer(7:178) , there is reason to doubt that the United States would commit itself to an all-out offensive. The most significant barrier to public support for a commitment of US forces is the perception that the Vietnam War was lost by the military. It just is not so. Political decisions were made in Washington to build a "Great Society" at the expense of people who trusted us in Southeast Asia. The North Vietnamese were beaten more than once. (35:153) The idea that the United States could not "pound the capacity for aggressive war out of a tin pot country like North Vietnam" is absurd. (36:265) The next barrier to public support would be cost. The costs were and would be high. We would be fighting the same enemy. He is significantly stronger. It would require a declaration of war, mobilization , and many American lives. War is not cheap. However, the commitment to victory that comes from a declaration of war might help us avoid the gradualism of the past and conclude hostilities

quickly. Public support for intervention might be gained by strong executive leadership responding to our treaty obligations with Thailand, but public support for the Vietnam conflict waned as the war dragged on and on. The necessity for quickness is important because the public is not likely to support any extended engagement on American soil. Fears that an engagement on the Southeast Asian peninsula risks superpower confrontation could also limit public support. Soviet forces are now positioned in Vietnam. Fears that the USSR would intervene must be counterpointed by recalling the Russian and Chinese threats to enter the Vietnam War. They proved hollow. Although the Russians have an interest in maintaining the capability to project force from the Vietnam bases, actual resolve to engage the Americans directly is not in evidence. Moreover, the Chinese are not a threat to enter an action in Kampuchea against us. It is more likely that they might enter on our side, if at all. It is in the interest of the Chinese that the Vietnamese become weak and the Soviets depart China's southern flank.

During the Vietnam War no European ally helped us. (7:191) We drew down our forces stationed in Europe to supply the Vietnam effort with men and materials. Southeast Asia demonstrated to those who view Europe as the centerpiece of U.S. foreign relations that there should be no more Vietnams. However, hegemonic control of the Southeast Asian peninsula by the Soviet Union and its surrogates is threatening to our

NATO allies. The security of the European way of life depends to a large degree on our ability to keep their access to Middle East oil open. Our ability to reach the Persian Gulf with forces could be contingent on the sea lanes in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Europeans are heavily dependent on Southeast Asia and Australia for bauxite, alumina, and tin. (40:18) A case can be made that would justify our intervention on the basis of international law. (39:107) Certainly our allies, who believe in the rule of law, might be convinced to support an effort to roll back the communists. The lack of European allies would make us pay for the forces as we did in the past, and commit to a militarization of the region unilaterally. (7:191) "As we ourselves demonstrate power, confidence and a sense of moral and political direction so those same qualities will be evoked in Western Europe." (9:71)

Military buildups and assistance, maneuver and posturing are necessary to credibly deter the Soviets and their client state Vietnam. While deterrence holds the other elements of our strategy, economic development, etc., can work to build the free world economy and the political structure that will frustrate and potentially rollback the design for world domination held by the Soviets.

Should deterrence fail, the most important lesson of the Vietnam War and, indeed, the history of war must not be



forgotten. That is "... that a favorable decision can only be  
achieved by offensive action. "(9:98)

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